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ABSTRACT

Designed for community groups and organizations, groups of older adults, senior clubs, and agencies, this manual documents the process of developing community education programs for older adults. The first section introduces the concept of a community learning center, while the second section considers whether a learning center should be developed. The next three sections look at three stages in setting up a learning center--planning (documenting need, setting program goals, establishing roles, fund raising), development (finding a location, gathering resources, designing the curriculum, recruiting teachers, promoting the program), and operation (registration, auxiliary services, community outreach, record-keeping, evaluation). The final section provides examples of program materials used in running a learning center, including curriculum ideas, procedures checklist, class leader application, information for class leaders, facility inspection checklist, registration card, identification card, interest survey, class evaluation form, and instructor's evaluation form. (YLB)

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Developing Community-Based Learning Centers for Older Adults

A Technical Assistance Manual

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by Betsy M. Sprouse and Karen Brown

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Preface

This manual documents the process of developing community education programs for older adults. It is the product of a two-year research and demonstration project entitled "Community-Based Learning Centers for Older Adults." The purposes of this project, which was funded in part by the Administration on Aging, were to foster the development of several learning centers, to document the developmental process, and to learn more about the motivations of older adult learners.

This is a technical assistance manual designed to introduce the concept of a community learning center, to describe how it operates, and to suggest how communities and groups of older adults can develop their own learning centers or similar programs. The information is presented in general terms so that it can be used in a variety of programs and settings. Each section of the manual describes a planning step and raises questions to help you relate the issues to your own situation. Community groups and organizations, groups of older adults, senior clubs, and agencies will find that this manual provides information and ideas on:

- various types of educational programs
- how to use community resources
- the elements involved in successful programs
- classes and courses
- turning learners into teachers
- keeping the program alive and growing

In addition to this manual, the Faye McBeath Institute on Aging has also produced the following materials related to learning centers and older adult education:

- A 20-minute slide/tape program entitled "Living and Learning," which describes the educational opportunities available to older adults and details the concept of Learning Centers. Loaned free of charge; user pays mailing costs and insurance.
- A monograph on Education and the Older Adult will be available late in 1982 (approximate cost $10.00).
- Three technical reports related to the Learning Center Project are available free of charge while the supply lasts:

  No. 1 Learning Center Evaluation Report
  No. 2 Learning Center Research Report
  No. 3 The Older Adult as Teacher

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Introduction

Even though more and more older adults are involved in lifelong learning, interested in continuing their education, and taking classes and courses, very little has been done to make educational activities convenient and accessible to them. Colleges and universities are offering free or reduced tuition to older adults who want to audit classes, but few go to the campus. Many community agencies offer classes, but their offerings are not coordinated or planned so that a wide variety of classes are available to interested older people.

One solution is to bring a variety of classes and courses into one community facility—a place where older adults can come to learn many things—where they are comfortable and where they can have a chance to develop and teach their own courses. This is the learning center concept, one that says that educational opportunities should be brought to people in their own communities in response to the needs and interests of the residents.

In October of 1978, the Faye McBeath Institute on Aging and Adult Life at the University of Wisconsin–Madison applied for and received a grant from the Administration on Aging to conduct a research and demonstration program on "Community-Based Learning Centers for Older Adults." The purpose of this project was to study the process of how communities can energize their own resources to provide educational programs to older adults, and to determine the value of these programs for older adults. In order to document that process, the Institute on Aging provided seed money to three Dane County communities to assist them in developing Learning Centers. A local agency or organization in each community was selected to sponsor the Learning Center, and staff coordinators were appointed. Each Learning Center also had a planning committee composed of older adults and community leaders. The project design consisted of six months of planning, a demonstration period of one year, and six months of research and evaluation.

In Belleville, Wisconsin, the "Learning Unlimited" program was sponsored by the Belleville Area Senior Citizens Program. Fifteen classes were offered during the year to 261 people, with most sessions taking place in a church hall. The classes in Belleville were scheduled consecutively, and included topics on history, art, health, and consumer education.

The Learning Center originally established in Mazomanie, Wisconsin, under the sponsorship of the Northwest Dane County Senior Outreach Program grew to serve four communities in the northwestern area of Dane County: Mazomanie, Black Earth, Cross Plains, and Roxbury. The 34 classes offered in the "Learning Shops" were taken by 247 people in such places as churches, public schools, and municipal buildings. Some communities scheduled concurrent classes while others ran them consecutively. Topics included geology, needlework, and painting.

Classes on the east side of Madison were scheduled into four 8-week sessions—a total of 34 classes. The "Living Enrichment Center" was sponsored by St. Bernard's Church, the Atwood Community Center, and the Near East Side Coalition of Older Adults. Classes were held in the church's parish center (formerly a school), and were attended by 253 people. The courses offered included literature, science, playreading, and exercise.

In each of these three Learning Centers, older adults were involved in planning and teaching the classes. As the Centers now continue to operate on an independent basis, they become an educational resource for all members of the community.

The evaluation and research components of the Learning Center Project focused on comparing the older adults at the Learning Centers to those Guest Students (auditors aged 62 and older) at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. The reports of these project components are available separately (see page iii).

What is a Learning Center?

A learning center is an educational program which draws together the resources of the community in order to meet the learning needs and interests of the area's older adults. It is designed to involve older adults as planners, teachers, and learners, and to provide educational programs in convenient, accessible facilities.

What's Different About A Learning Center?

A learning center is a community-centered enterprise. Its purpose is not to compete with local colleges or schools, but rather to provide a neighborhood alternative to formal educational institutions. Learning center programs are less threatening than a college for some older adults, and lower costs and daytime classes are just two of its attractive features.

An important element of a learning center is its accessibility. The center is designed to serve a rather limited geographic area such as a neighborhood or a community. Classes are held in an existing facility: a church, library, senior center, school, or community center. The building used for a learning center should be not only physically accessible but also psychologically accessible, i.e., older adults should be familiar enough with the facility that they feel comfortable about being there and feel "at home."

However, a learning center is not just a facility. It is a community enterprise which can identify and energize local resources to make educational programs available to area residents. It involves the older adults in the planning process and provides them with an opportunity to share their knowledge and skills as teachers.

What Isn't A Learning Center

In spite of the potential of a learning center, it cannot be all things to all people. It is unrealistic to expect that a learning center can provide all the services of a school or the curriculum of a college. It may not be possible to offer credits or continuing education units (CEU's) for learning center programs. Or, it may not be possible to provide transportation or meals for learning center participants. While these are indisputably important services, they cannot always be part of an educational program.

Elements of A Learning Center

A learning center consists of:

1. **A FACILITY**—A learning center needs to operate from one or more sites on a consistent basis. The facility need not be a school, but should be a building in the community that is both physically and psychologically accessible to older adults.
2. **RESOURCES**—In addition to the human resources of the program, the learning center should provide access to books, films, records, printed materials, and audiovisual equipment for its learners. Resources beyond the reach of the learning center can be

provided through cooperative arrangements with community schools or libraries.

3. **TEACHERS**—The non-threatening atmosphere of a learning center can encourage older adults to become involved in teaching as well as learning. A teacher need not be a professional—older adults, community leaders, young adults knowledgeable about their hobbies, businessmen or women—all make excellent teacher prospects.
4. **LEARNERS**—The learners are the backbone of the program. They will generate program ideas, as well as participate in the activities. A successful learning center includes learners from the different residential arrangements and geographic areas of the community.
5. **PROGRAM LEADERS**—These are the people who coordinate the program activities and planning. They may be paid staff persons or the learners themselves. When the learners are also the program planners and the teachers, the program becomes their own and gains strength and stability.

Should You Start A Learning Center?

A community learning center for older adults—sound like a good idea? If so, now is the time to stop and ask yourself a few questions.

Does the Community Need It?

Start by looking at the existing educational programs in your community and their service areas. Would a learning center duplicate these services? Try to identify gaps in these programs that a learning center could fill. For example, the only educational opportunity available to older adults in the community may be courses offered for credit at the local community college. A learning center could offer more informal learning opportunities.

Look also at the participation rates of existing programs and the percentage of older adults involved. Are these programs reaching a wide variety of people in the community? Are older adults well-represented? If not, is it because the programs are not meeting their learning needs?

Do Older Adults Want It?

Your next step is to determine if the older adults in the community want a learning center. One way to do this is to look at the needs assessment reports at the local office on aging or the area agency on aging to see if a need for educational programs has been identified. Another method of determining need is to ask the older adults themselves. While it is difficult to talk to each and every older adult in a community, you can meet with groups of older people or identify key organizations and individuals who can give you a sense of community need.

At this point in your thinking process, you may want to set up an informal or ad-hoc planning committee. Such a group can help you decide whether to start a learning center and, if so, what direction it should take. When setting up the planning committee, consider including both potential learning center participants and community professionals who have knowledge of the community and its older adults, and the skills it would take to set up the learning center. A well-chosen planning committee can give you information on the needs and interests of the target audiences, and can later assist with program planning.

Would Your Organization Support It?

It is possible that your own organization or group will be a major source of support for a learning center. Think about how a learning center relates to the existing or planned programs of your organization. Would the development of a learning center fall within its overall goals and purposes?

Your organization also needs to decide what type of commitment it is willing to give. This commitment will probably be one of two types:

1. **TEMPORARY**—An organization or group could decide to sponsor

a learning center's initial development until it is able to operate on its own. This type of commitment might involve providing seed money and resources for the first year of operation. Once the learning center has established a network of people active in the program, the organization can withdraw from a major decision-making role.

2. **PERMANENT**—An organization or group may decide to include the learning center in its permanent program offerings. Through this sponsorship, the organization may provide staff, facilities, resource materials, or financial support.

Would Anyone Else Support It?

Although one group or organization may be the learning center's major sponsor, it is essential to obtain support from other organizations. Involving other organizations is important for both economic and programmatic reasons. Different groups and organizations can lend unique perspectives to the planning and development of a learning center. Also, it may be easier to obtain small amounts of financial support from many different organizations than a large amount from one or two sources.

Would Anyone Oppose It?

Many groups and organizations welcome an opportunity to pool their resources and offer programs through joint community efforts. Others will oppose such programs. It is important for you to be aware of those who might not want to see a learning center developed, and to try to circumvent this opposition by:

- Identifying possible reasons for the opposition. Are there gaps in information that need to be clarified? Would it be better if another organization sponsored the learning center? Does the potential for competition or conflict of interest exist?
- Meeting with those people or groups who might have reason to oppose the program. Take the time to make sure that others understand what you're trying to do, how you're going to accomplish it, and how it will affect other groups and organizations.
- Including the opposition in the program planning. Try appointing a representative of the opposing group to your planning committee or working with that group on one aspect of the program (like recruiting teachers). Often an active role in the decision-making process will draw different groups together, especially if they are working toward a common goal.

Can You Do It?

As the person most interested in learning centers, you need to ask yourself the most important question of all: Can I take on the respon-

sibility for setting up a learning center? You need to assess your own abilities and your level of commitment. You will need to utilize your leadership and organizational skills and your ability to energize other people and resources. The amount of time that you are willing to give the program and your level of commitment to seeing your ideas become reality should also be evaluated. This careful and early consideration of your resources and the support of others will help carry the learning center from the idea stage to an active and successful community program.

The Planning Stage

So you've decided to set up a learning center. You are now at the planning stage—the period that requires the most time and the most attention to detail. Even with thousands of people lined up to take classes, careful and thorough planning is the key to a successful program.

Documenting the Need

Even though you are convinced of the need for a learning center, others may need more persuasion. You should now pull together information and figures which show how your program can help meet the educational needs of the community's older adults. You can use existing community surveys, research data on the learning needs of older adults, or develop your own methods to collect information. Talk to groups of older adults and individuals. Write down their ideas and suggestions, or ask them to fill out an interest survey you developed.

In documenting the need for a learning center, try to see that these questions are answered:

- What is the target audience(s)?
- What are their educational needs?
- Wh[illegible] agencies or programs currently exist to meet these needs?

- How well are these needs currently being met?
- How will your program meet these needs?
- How will the community as a whole benefit?

Setting Program Goals

Certain goals and objectives for the program will need to be established when you determine what the learning center will do for which group of people. The program's goals can be broad or general, but should reflect an ideal state or the program's optimum level of operation. For example, one goal of the learning center could be, "To help older adults cope with inflation." Objectives are more specific, and usually indicate a level of measurement from which success can be indicated. An example related to the goal stated above would be, "After completing the course 'Today's Economics', at least half of the participants should be able to reduce their monthly utility bills by 10 percent."

The goals and objectives set for the learning center should be determined by the planning staff, the planning committee, and the learners. They should reflect the overall desired results, the action necessary to achieve them, and the consequences of the actions. More specifically, the goals and objectives should address concerns such as:

- What individual and community needs can the learning center serve?
- How will the participants benefit?
- How should the learning center develop and grow?
- What changes could result from the learning center programs?

Establishing Roles

Now is the time to determine what has to be done to set up the learning center and who should do which tasks. First, identify the tasks that need to be done. Next, think about the competencies and resources needed to accomplish these tasks. Now identify people who can help and are willing to take on a task or role. Often these roles can be rotated, which will help develop skills and talents among the learning center participants and staff.

If you haven't done so as yet, now is the time to appoint a planning committee for the learning center. This is a policy-making and program-oriented body, composed of current learning center participants, older adults from the community, and community professionals. The people on the planning committee should be chosen or appointed on the basis of: (1) their knowledge of the community, (2) their talents or skills related to the development of the program, or (3) the group, organization, or demographic characteristic they represent. A beginning list of potential committee members includes:

- public librarians
- extension agents
- school board members
- nursing home workers
- neighborhood association representatives
- retired teachers
- social service workers
- city council members
- college teachers
- local clergy

- area professionals and merchants
- newspaper or television reporters
- area agency on aging employees

Fund Raising

Up to this point, little mention has been made of money. Ideally, the learning center will obtain a majority of its money through class fees and community support, but it is unrealistic to think that no external support will ever be needed. A learning center needs both money and resources to operate, and may have to look outside its own doors in order to find this support. If so, strive to maintain the local character and community flavor of the program.

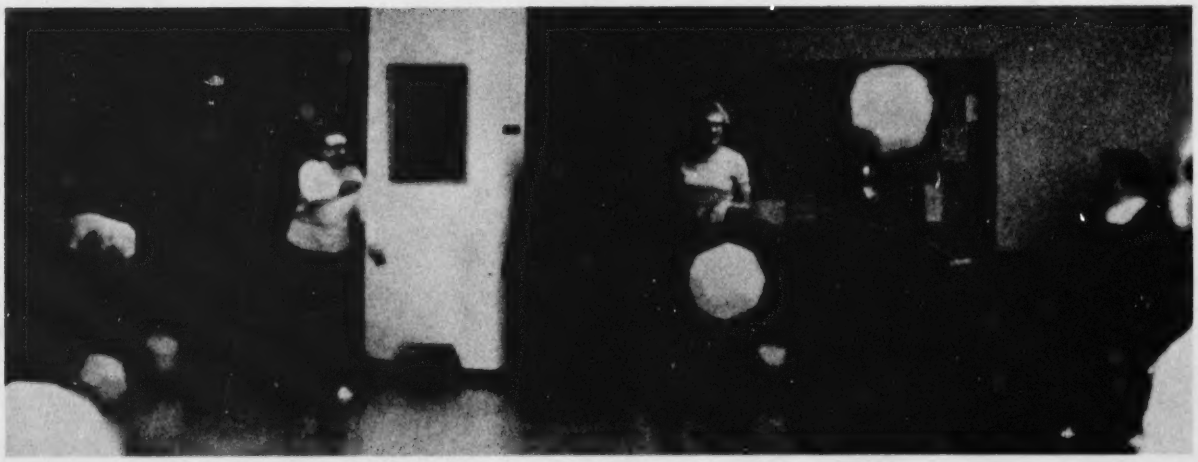
Before you begin to look for funding, determine how much money is needed to operate the learning center on a monthly or annual basis. Be sure to include staff and teacher salaries (if any), office supplies and equipment, educational materials, printing and postage, telephone costs, and publicity expenses. Next, identify which of these items require cash, and which could be handled through donated services or by bartering for services. For example, would a grade school let you use its mimeograph machine and paper in exchange for some volunteers for playground supervision? Finally, estimate the amount of revenue you can expect from participant fees. If your expenses exceed your anticipated revenue, you will need to look elsewhere for support, both monetary and material. You might consider:

- Your own group or organization
- Co-operating or co-sponsoring groups and organizations
- Local businesses, banks, industry
- Local associations and civic groups
- Governmental boards or units
- The local office on aging or the area agency on aging
- Community trusts or local foundations
- Other local agencies that serve your target audience(s)

When negotiating with potential funders, it often works to your advantage to divide the learning center program into smaller, discrete units. It may be easier for the funding agency to identify with one particular aspect of the program that with its overall administration. For instance, a local bank may be more interested in supporting a year-long series of classes on consumer issues than paying the salary of a program coordinator. Finally, make sure that all funding sources are given large amounts of recognition and publicity.

The Development Stage

Once the program planing is underway, you will need to start working on the details of the learning center operation, like who will teach which classes and where?



Finding a Location

The most visible evidence of the learning center program will be the center itself. If classroom space is not available through the group or organization sponsoring the program, you will have to find a facility from which to operate. A facility carefully selected for its physical and psychological accessibility can greatly contribute to the learning center's success.

Although the type of facility you need will depend on the type of program you design, you should ask these types of questions:

- Is the facility one where older adults will feel comfortable?
- Is the site easy to get to by car, bus or subway? Is parking available?
- Is the facility in a safe area of the community?
- Is the building itself accessible (elevator, minimal number of steps, handrails, etc.)?
- If the building is used for other activities, are there enough classrooms?
- Is the building covered by liability insurance?
- Are the classrooms well-lit?
- Is there adequate heat and ventilation?
- Is the furniture comfortable? Can it be re-arranged?

- Are there electrical outlets, coat racks, and restrooms readily available?
- Do you need any special types of classrooms, such as gymnasium or a kitchen?

Gathering Resources

Any community has a wealth of resources that can be tapped in setting up a learning center. Remember, creativity is the key!

- **LIBRARIES**—Your public library can provide books (including large-print materials), films, magazines, and records. Whatever they don't have, they can get through the inter-library loan program.
- **SCHOOLS**—The local public schools and colleges may be willing to contribute educational materials and supplies, such as textbooks, audiovisual equipment, art materials, furniture—even teachers.
- **LOCAL BUSINESSES**—By personally contacting local businesses and organizations and talking about the learning center, you may be able to persuade them to donate space, materials, or teachers for classes. Don't forget to give them credit in your publicity.
- **NEWSPAPERS**—Local newspapers can help you build program participation through articles and notices about learning center activities. Invite reporters to visit the center and keep them informed about classes and programs.
- **TELEVISION AND RADIO**—Take advantage of free public service announcements to publicize your program. Are there any talk shows on which you could discuss the learning center and its upcoming activities?

Designing the Curriculum

Your initial groundwork has probably generated many ideas for courses and educational programs that the learning center could sponsor. Additional ideas can be solicited from a number of sources.

During the early planning stages, your needs assessment should have identified some areas for program development. These needs and the courses designed to meet them are often described as instrumental or expressive. Categorizing courses in this way can help you develop a well-balanced curriculum.

INSTRUMENTAL: The content areas that meet these needs tend to cover topics essential to the daily lives of the older adult, such as health, insurance, investments, or exercise.

EXPRESSIVE: Course content that fulfills expressive needs allows a person to explore ideas, life experiences, and thoughts. Often these courses are enriching to the older person's life. Such a curriculum might include creative writing, photography, or religion.

A second source of course ideas is the learners themselves. The planning committee can play a major role through their contacts with current and potential participants. Other groups and organizations that are interested in the program should also be contacted. Encourage people to generate ideas and make a note of them all. Be open to all ideas and willing to take a few risks on courses.

Finally, existing programs are a good source for course ideas. Contact other programs that have sponsored educational activities and look through their brochures and publicity materials.* Often the same course idea can be used in your learning center or it may spark a new idea.

The planning committee now has the difficult task of determining which courses should be offered. The following questions may help focus this decision:

- How does the course idea fit into the learning center's program goals?
- How much and what type of need was documented for this type of course?
- Will resources (teachers, materials, equipment, etc.) be available at a reasonable cost?

The planning committee will also need to decide on the length of the courses. Learning center courses should not be one-shot events but should allow the learners to explore a topic in depth. Courses of four to ten weeks in duration seem to work well. You may want to vary the length of depending on holidays, other community programs, or the time of year.

Courses can be offered during the day or evening. Many older adults prefer to participate in activities during the day, but you may discover a sizable audience for evening programs. The length of each class session will vary depending on the type of course. For example, an art class should allow plenty of time for studio work, while a current events discussion may only need one hour. The planning committee should be sensitive to the needs of both teachers and learners.

Before the course starts, it is a good idea to determine any minimum or maximum enrollment limits. Be careful though, about playing "The Numbers Game." It is gratifying to have 400 people show up for a class, but the four people who enroll in a less popular class may have an equally rewarding educational experience. After a

* An excellent source of information and ideas is "Learning Opportunities for Older Persons: A Program Guide," available from the Institute of Lifetime Learning, NRTA/AARP, 1909 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20049.

few experiments with different types of courses, you'll become sensitive to enrollment potentials and trends.

What should the class fee be? If you have a well-subsidized program, you might consider offering classes free of charge. However, research and experience have shown that people who pay a fee are more committed to the program. They seem to feel that a class with no price also has no value. In order to attract participants from a wide variety of backgrounds and income levels, try to set class fees in the $2–10 range. It is certainly reasonable though, to charge higher fees when the subject or course materials warrant it, or to offer free classes occasionally when the teacher volunteers his or her time. If class fees could be a problem, you might think about presenting the option of learners bartering their services (such as addressing envelopes or distributing fliers) in exchange for a tuition waiver.

Recruiting Teachers

Learning center teachers can be found in a variety of places. Consider your own community as you scan this list of suggestions:

- The learning center participants
- Public school teachers
- Members of retired teacher associations (NRTA/AARP)
- Community colleges, area universities, extension programs
- Local government officials
- Community professionals and merchants
- Community residents with a subject specialty (for instance, club or association officers, editors of hobby magazines or newsletters, people who run unique shops)

Some teachers will be confident of their abilities to work with a group of older adult learners. Others may want ideas or additional skills before they take on a class. Workshops or resource materials which highlight teaching/learning methods, characteristics of older adult learners, or creative use of materials can help build the confidence of potential teachers. You will need to walk a fine line between imposing too much structure on the teachers and not giving enough guidance. An open channel of communication between you and the teachers will help clarify the goals of the program and aid the teaching and learning process.

Should you pay the teachers? It is unlikely that your program's budget will be able to pay the teachers at a rate comparable to what they could earn at a school or college. It is also unlikely that all of your teachers of choice will be willing to volunteer their time. A realistic approach is to plan on paying some teachers a modest salary (say $5.00 or $10.00 an hour) and trying to persuade others to teach without pay. Or, you could reward volunteer teachers by offering them travel expenses, lunch, letters of reference, or the left-over supplies from an art class.

Speaking of supplies, be sure to have the teachers help you identify what resources or materials will be needed for each course and where to obtain them. Now is the time to pull out your list of community resources, and look for free or low-cost sources of course materials. Your planning committee can help you decide when it is appropriate to include the cost of materials in the course fee, and when it should be a separate charge or the learners' personal responsibility.

Promoting the Program

Getting the word out about upcoming courses is crucial to building learning center participation. Use the local media sources you have identified, such as newspapers, radio, and television. Don't overlook the smaller papers or the "shoppers weekly" papers distributed free in some communities. Investigate both free and paid advertising available through these channels.

During the planning process, you developed a network of communication and contacts that can now be tapped. The planning committee members have contact with other groups and organizations. Can you put announcements in their newsletters? Current learning center participants should be encouraged to spread the word among their friends and neighbors. You should plan on making visits to area clubs and organizations to explain the program and answer questions.

You may want to develop your own publicity materials, such as brochures, posters, fliers, course lists, and newsletters. These can be mailed or distributed to individuals and groups and displayed in area stores or buildings where older adults congregate. Again, be sure that your publicity materials give due credit to funders and sponsors!

The Operational Stage

You have developed a curriculum, you've spread the word—you are now ready to open the doors! Below are some of the steps involved in starting the program and keeping it going.

Registration

Even if your learning center is an informal one, it is a good idea to keep track of who is enrolled in which classes. Use 3"×5" or 4"×6" index cards to note the name, address and phone number of the participants and the title of their class or classes. From these cards you may want to type up mailing labels to use in announcing future programs or draw up a roster to duplicate and hand out to all class members.

At registration, you will want to collect the course fees (if any). Be prepared to supply change and receipts. It is a good idea to have extra program brochures and course lists on hand, and perhaps a table nearby with information about other community agencies and services.

Although the set-up need not be as elaborate as the first day of classes, you should plan on having registration materials available at each class session. The program should be flexible enough so that people can join in at any time.

Auxiliary Services

Once the educational program is in full swing and is going well, you may want to consider adding other programs to the learning center. These "added attractions" can enhance the learning activities, but make sure they don't drain the center's resources. A few ideas:

- A meal program, either privately sponsored or in conjunction with the local senior nutrition program.
- Recreational activities before, after, or between classes—maybe dancing, singing, crafts, exercise, or sports.
- Social events among learning center participants, such as tours, parties, theatre trips, restaurant tours.
- An older adult day care center, with the learning center classes as one of its regular programs.

Community Outreach

One of the keys to maintaining a dynamic program is to continually make your presence (and that of the learning center) felt in the community. Spend time talking to people and groups, telling them about the program. Let the participants know that their recommendations are the best publicity the learning center could have. Ask them to talk to their friends or speak to clubs to which they belong. Talk to local employers about displaying program materials in breakrooms or cafeterias. Keep in touch with your community's outreach workers and social workers to see if any of their clients would be interested in your classes. In short, don't rest on the laurels of your program's success. Keep working to make it a better program for more people.

One area of community outreach you may want to consider is taking classes to the institutionalized or homebound elderly in your community. "Graduates" of learning center classes could share their knowledge and class materials with the less mobile elderly on a one-to-one basis. They could also lead group discussions in nursing homes in conjunction with special television programs such as "Holocaust". These visiting teachers can draw upon the resources of the learning center and the knowledge of their own teachers for any necessary assistance.

Record-Keeping

As burdensome as record-keeping can be, you'll want to keep track of the following:

- The participants (for follow-ups and future publicity).

- The teachers involved in the learning center.
- Your resource file—who can do what, where to get what, and assorted tidbits of information.
- The center's finances, both income and expenditures.

Evaluation

No one is quite sure how to judge the value of education, so don't be scared off by evaluation. For your purposes, you will want to know how well the classes were received, and if the teachers were effective. Your reason for evaluating is to determine the future direction of the program.

Evaluation is a judgment, based on data and information you have collected. Evaluation can be formal (as when participants fill out evaluation forms) or as informal as the information you get from talking to people. You may want to use both these approaches to find out the answers to the following questions:

- Were the learners pleased with the course content?
- Did the learners get what they expected out of the class? Did they get more or less?
- Were the learners pleased with the teacher? Would they take another class from him or her?
- What changes would the learners like to see in the class format (time, day, location, structure)?
- What additional classes would the learners like to see offered?

With this and the enrollment data, you will have to make some decisions about the program. Ask yourself,

- How are things going?
- What shall we do next?
- What changes should be made?
- Is it time to stop?

Remember that evaluation is not an absolute judgment of your program. Rather, it is an opportunity to make changes and improvements that will strengthen the learning center.

Keeping the Program Alive

Even with a large group of faithful participants, you need to continually work at keeping the learning center programs interesting and entertaining. Collect course ideas from college catalogs, adult high school programs, and other older adult programs around the country. Bring new ideas and people into the center by co-sponsoring classes

with other organizations. Take the class out of the classroom—try a class in birdwatching or a series of local historic tours. Bring in new participants and teachers, maybe high school students to teach auto repair. Throw in a "controversial" program or two, maybe on "Sex in Cinema" or "Witchcraft for the Beginner." Whatever you choose to do, do it to make your learning center an exciting and challenging place to be. Your job will be more rewarding, and you may find that before you know it, the learning center has become a permanent and important resource of your community.

Examples of Program Materials

On the following pages you will find examples of some of the forms used in running a learning center. These forms were used in the Dane County, Wisconsin, research and demonstration project. They are presented here as models, to be adapted to your own program's needs and characteristics.

Curriculum Ideas

ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHEOLOGY
Afro-American History and Culture
American Culture
Archeology
Aging Around the World

BASIC EDUCATION
General Education Development (G.E.D.)
English Refresher
English as a Second Language

COMMUNICATIONS
Storytelling
Creative Writing
Journal Keeping
Poetry Workshop
Films of the 30's and 40's
Writing Your Family History

CONSUMER EDUCATION
Money Management
Saving on Your Utility Bills
Economical Auto Repair
Income Tax for Older Adults
Law for the Layperson
Wills and Estate Planning

CRAFTS
Ceramics
Glassblowing
Jewelry and Metalcraft
Furniture Refinishing
Woodcarving
Needlework
Quilting
Weaving
Bread Dough Art
Calligraphy
Leathercraft
Crafts for Christmas

CURRENT EVENTS
What's Happening in the World?
Analysis of Current Events

DANCE AND EXERCISE
Fitness After Fifty
Wheelchair Exercise
Ballroom Dance
Aerobic Dance
Folk Dancing

EARTH SCIENCES
Man and Environment
Desert Landscape
Astronomy

ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS
Today's Economy
The World of Computers
Understanding Economic Issues

FOREIGN LANGUAGES
Spanish/French/German for Fun
Mini-Course for Travel in Spanish/French/German Speaking Countries
Japanese
Pennsylvania German

HEALTH
Healthy Living
Alcoholism in the Later Years
Arthritis
Heart Attack Prevention
Understanding Drugs
Medicare Changes

HISTORY
Our American Heritage
America: Where Are You Going?
History You've Lived Through
(State): The Land and the People
Genealogy
Our (State) Heritage

HOME MAINTENANCE
Repairs Around the Home
Fix-it Yourself
Moving Out of Your Home
Homemaking for Men

HUMANITIES AND ARTS
Art History
Music of Yesterday and Today
History of Dance
Human Values
Introduction to the Humanities

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL
Peer Counseling for Senior Citizens
Information Please
Legal Assistance
Interview and Outreach

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
Legislation Affecting the Elderly
Senior Power
Know Your Legal Rights
The Law and How to Use It

LIFE SCIENCES
The Human Body
Human Sexuality
Human Aging
"Senile" Behavior and its Causes

LITERATURE
Adventures in Literature
The Novel
Short Stories
Great Russian Novelists
The Bible as Literature
Great Books

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE
Fundamental Math
The Metric System
Science for Today
Electricity

MUSIC AND DRAMA
Our Heritage in Music
Gospel Music
Rhythm Band
Play Reading
Drama Workshop

NATURE: INSIDE AND OUT
Horticulture
Vegetable Gardening
Wildflowers
Birdwatching
Watching the Weather

NUTRITION
Creative Cooking on a Budget
Vitamins—Miracles or Myths
Cooking Class for Men
Nutrition for One
Gourmet Cooking
Microwave Cooking

OCCULT
Astrology
ESP
Psychic Phenomena

PERSONAL APPEARANCE
Fashion, Figure, and Makeup
Recycling of Clothing
Sewing for Fun
Dress for Success

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
Living and Aging
Positive Values—The Joy of Living
Sex Over Sixty
Grief and Loneliness
Coping with Widowhood

PHILOSOPHY
Man, Reason and Behavior
Great Decisions
Plato and Aristotle

POLITICAL SCIENCE
American Government
The American Presidency
Current Events from a Historical Perspective
World Trouble Spots

PSYCHOLOGY
Human Behavior
Dream Analysis
Anxiety and Fears
Human Relations
Death and Dying

RELIGION
Great Religions of the World
Bible History
Women in Religion

RETIREMENT LIFE-STYLES
Retirement: Ready or Not
Creative Use of Leisure Time

SAFETY
Security and Self Defense
Crime Prevention
Safety in the Home
Defensive Driving

SENSORY SKILLS
Lip Reading
Sign Language
Speed Reading

SOCIOLOGY
Modern Social Problems
The Family in a Changing Society
The Older Woman in America
The Changing South

SPORTS AND GAMES
Swimming for Exercise and Enjoyment
Bicycling
Tennis
Chess
Bridge

TRAVEL
Armchair Travel
Walking Group
Famous Places in Europe

VISUAL ARTS
Drawing and Sketching
Painting Workshop
Sculpture
Photography

WORK
Second Careers
Voluntarism
Ombudsman Training
Own Your Own Business

Procedures Checklist

When Hiring Teachers

- ☐ Have them fill out Class Leader Application
- ☐ Give them the Information for Learning Center Class Leaders

When Looking for Classroom Space

- ☐ Use the Facility Inspection form

At or Before the First Class

- ☐ Have new participants fill out the registration card
- ☐ Give each new participant any explanatory material on the classes and the program
- ☐ Give each participant an ID Card with their ID number written on it

During the Classes

- ☐ Keep attendance records

At or Before the Last Class

- ☐ Have participants complete Class Evaluations
- ☐ Have teachers complete Instructor's Evaluation

When the Class is Over

- ☐ Turn in list of participants (name, address, ID#, name of class(es) taken)
- ☐ Turn in attendance sheets
- ☐ Turn in teacher applications with amount of honorarium noted in top right corner
- ☐ Turn in participant evaluations
- ☐ Turn in teacher evaluations

Learning Center
Class Leader Application

Name: _____

Home Address: _____ Business Address: _____

_____ _____

Telephone: _____ Telephone: _____

What are convenient times during the day or evening to reach you?

_____

Social Security Number: _____
(Needed to pay your travel expenses and/or honorarium)

1. What topics(s) are you interested in teaching? _____
   _____
2. Do you drive?
3. Do you have a preference for the day of the week that you would teach a class?

   Do you prefer mornings, afternoons, or either?
4. Have you ever taught before? If so, what kind and at what level?
5. Have you worked with groups? If so, what kind and at what level?
6. Have you worked with the elderly? If so, where and in what capacity?
7. What is your highest educational degree or level of education?
8. Are you age 60 or over? _____yes _____no
9. Please check those areas you want included in the orientation workshop:

   _____skills for teaching adults or leading group discussions

   _____characteristics of the older adult learner

   _____techniques for identifying and gathering subject material

Return this form to the Learning Center at which you are interested in teaching.

Information for Learning Center Class Leaders

Welcome to the Learning Center! We are pleased that you are going to be teaching in this program, and we look forward to working with you over the next few weeks.

Before your class starts, and probably while it is going on, the Learning Center coordinator will be sharing some information with you. Some of this material is attached—it is suggestions and guidelines we have gathered that may help you in your teaching experience. Other information will be discussed in group or individual meetings between the coordinator and the teachers.

Please be assured that we are not trying to tell you your business. We value your expertise highly, and we will not try to tell you how to teach your topic. However, since the teachers in this program come from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences, we thought it would be helpful to some if we were to prepare some materials and share our ideas and suggestions on how we can all help make this program a success. If this information and materials are already familiar to you, please bear with us, and please help us by sharing your ideas and experience. If it's not, we hope that you will read it and adapt it to your own teaching style.

Welcome, and thank you for teaching in this program. Please feel free to call upon the Learning Center coordinator or me if there is any way in which we can be of help.

Betsy M. Sprouse
Project Director

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEARNING CENTER CLASS LEADERS

1. The students in your class will be people with different backgrounds, different experiences. This variety will be a challenge to you as the teacher, in that you will have to search for a common level at which to teach. However, that same variety can add spice to your class, and you can draw upon the students to help teach. We are all learners, and we can all learn something new every day.

2. One of the most important things you can do as a teacher is to establish a supportive climate for learning. You can do this by exhibiting friendliness and warmth, by affirming and endorsing the student's responses, and by valuing the opinions and life experiences that the older adults will bring into the discussions. You may find it helpful to have the class make name tags or place cards so you and the group members can get to know each other. On the first day of class, be sure to introduce yourself, and have each

member of the class do the same. It's also a nice idea to tell them something about yourself and your interest in the topic you are teaching.

3. The eyesight and hearing problems that some (not all) older adults have may affect the ease with which they learn. You can help by not overusing printed or audio-visual materials, avoiding pacing around the room, facing the students when you speak, and speaking relatively slowly. If it's appropriate to the topic you are teaching, try to allow time to give individual attention to the students who need or ask for it.

4. You can use slides, films, diagrams, or write on the chalkboard to reinforce or illustrate verbal information. The writing should be large enough to be seen by those farthest away. If you prefer, handouts can be typed in large print and reproduced to pass out to the students if you will give the material to the Learning Center coordinator. A week's notice for the reproduction of handouts would be appreciated.

5. Allow plenty of time for your students to learn—let them set the pace for the class. Present new information in a moderately-paced and well-organized manner. Most people are comfortable learning new things when the material relates first to their own experience or things they already know, then proceeds to the more complex or the unfamiliar. Be as flexible as you can.

6. Try tactfully to avoid allowing any participant to dominate the class. All the participants should be drawn into the class discussion if at all possible.

7. At the end of the class session, you may wish to summarize that day's discussion and take a few minutes to plan the next session with the class. By letting them know what you will be covering, you can also encourage them to think about the material, and perhaps bring in their own ideas, clippings, objects, etc. which relate to the discussion. It's nice to thank the class members for coming, and for helping to make the class a success. Remind them of the day and time of the next class meeting, and let them know that you will be looking forward to seeing them then.

Facility Inspection for Learning Center Class

Date: _____

Name of Facility or Organization _____

Location of Facility:

Street Address: _____

Room Number: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Ownership of Facility, or _____

Management Company _____

Activity to be held in facility _____

_____

Dates to be used: From _____ To _____

Estimated number of people to be involved: _____

Does the facility or organization presently carry liability insurance? Yes, with _____ (Company)

No

Facility Checklist:

Features	**Present/Absent**	**Comments**
1. Physical accessibility (ramp, elevator, small number of low stairs)	____/____	
2. Adequate, free parking	____/____	
3. Adequate chairs, tables, desks	____/____	
4. Adequate, non-glare lighting	____/____	
5. Adequate plugs for electrical equipment	____/____	
6. Adequate ventilation	____/____	
7. Heat	____/____	
8. Rest rooms	____/____	
9. Coat racks or storage area	____/____	

10. Refreshment or meal facilities _____/_____

11. Other features noted: _____/_____
_____/_____
_____/_____

List any special features noted that may affect the safety of the participants, such as throw rugs, electrical cords across the floors, machinery, etc. Indicate what steps you have taken or will take to reduce these risks.

PROBLEM **SOLUTION**

I have inspected the facility described above and find it suitable/not suitable (cross one out) for a Learning Center class.

_____
Inspector's Signature

Learning Center Registration Card

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ Session _____

_____ Fee _____

Phone _____ ID # _____

CLASS SELECTION

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

How did you hear about this program? _____

_____

Learning Center Identification Card Sample

LIVING ENRICHMENT CENTER

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____

ID# _____ DATE ISSUED _____

2438 Atwood Avenue,
Madison, WI 53704 ***241-1574***

Learning Center Interest Survey

If you are interested in the Learning Center, we would like to know. The purpose of the center is to provide learning opportunities and resources which you want. Please indicate below which areas interest you. If you have talent or knowledge in a particular area that you would like to share, we would also like to know about that.

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

Please indicate the areas in which you would like to see courses offered:

_____ _____

_____ _____

Please indicate any areas in which you might like to teach a course:

_____ _____

_____ _____

Thanks for your ideas!

Learning Center Program and Class Evaluation

One of the major goals at the Learning Center is to offer the programs and classes that you want. We need to hear from you. This short form is one way that you can let us know what you want and would like to see us do. Please help us plan our future programs and classes. *There is no need to put your name on this form.*

1. Today's date: _____
2. Name of this class: _____
3. Instructor's name: _____

On the basis of the sessions you have attended, please answer the following questions by circling one of the responses indicated.

4. All in all, how would you rate the class?

   excellent good average fair poor

5. How would you rate the instructor in terms of command of the subject matter?

   excellent good average fair poor

6. How would you rate the instructor in terms of ability to communicate clearly?

   excellent good average fair poor

7. How would you rate the instructor's ability to present the subject matter in an interesting and thought-provoking manner?

   excellent good average fair poor

8. How would you rate the facilities (seating, lights, room, ventilation, etc.) where your class met?

   excellent good average fair poor

9. How would you rate the Learning Center staff (instructor included) in terms of responsiveness and helpfulness?

   excellent good average fair poor

Please comment on the following:

10. What would most improve the Learning Center?

11. What classes would you like to see offered in upcoming sessions?

12. Did you get what you expected from this class? Did you learn more or less than you thought you would?

13. What time of day and which days (M-F) are the most convenient for you to attend Learning Center classes?

14. Is transportation to the Learning Center a problem for you?

15. Do you think that you have sufficient input into planning future Learning Center classes and activities?

16. Do you think you will return to the Learning Center to take another class?

17. Please make additional comments that you would like to:

Learning Center Instructor's Evaluation

As part of our overall goal to provide and maintain quality programs for the community, we would like your candid responses to the following questions. This is one way that you as a teacher and a member of our staff can provide input to the Learning Center and help us plan for future programs and classes.

The following statements describe aspects of the Learning Center's Programs, facilities, staff, organization, classes and students. Please respond *twice* for each statement. *First,* indicate how important the area described by the statement is to *you.* For example, does the statement described something that is of no importance to you or something that is of great importance? *Second,* please indicate how great a need there is for improvement or help in the area described by the statement. Also, space is provided after each statement for your comments. If you feel that there is a need to improve a certain area or facet of the program, how can we help? For example, would you like to attend an in-service that would provide more information in a particular area?

Today's Date _____/_____

Name of this class _____

Your Name _____

How important is this to you?					Please circle a number for your responses.	How much improvement or help is needed?				
None	Little	Some	Much	Great		None	Little	Some	Much	Great
1	2	3	4	5	1. The space provided for the class meetings was large enough.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
1	2	3	4	5	2. The space provided for the class meetings was adequately lighted and ventilated.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
1	2	3	4	5	3. In the space provided for class meetings, the seating was adequate and comfortable.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
1	2	3	4	5	4. The location of the Center is convenient.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
1	2	3	4	5	5. Transportation to the Center is adequate.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
1	2	3	4	5	6. There is sufficient advertising of Center programs.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
1	2	3	4	5	7. The Center's staff is helpful and available.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
1	2	3	4	5	8. There is sufficient communication among the staff.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					

How important is this to you?					Please circle a number for your responses.	How much improvement or help is needed?				
None	Little	Some	Much	Great		None	Little	Some	Much	Great
1	2	3	4	5	9. The students in this class were interested in the topic.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
1	2	3	4	5	10. Class discussion was an important part of this class.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
1	2	3	4	5	11. The students in this class readily participated in discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
1	2	3	4	5	12. Presentation of a topic to older adults is most effective when a formal lecture format is used.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
1	2	3	4	5	13. Presentation of a topic to older adults is most effective when the group size is small (under 8).	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
1	2	3	4	5	14. Presentation of a topic to older adults is more difficult than presentation to a younger age group.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
1	2	3	4	5	15. Presentation of a topic to older adults requires different teaching techniques than a presentation to a younger age group.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					

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How important is this to you?					**Please circle a number for your responses.**	**How much improvement or help is needed?**				
None	Little	Some	Much	Great		None	Little	Some	Much	Great
1	2	3	4	5	16. I believe I have sufficient knowledge about the needs of older adults to continue being an effective teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
					Comment:					
					17. A teacher in a Learning Center should be:					
1	2	3	4	5	a. Skilled in teaching	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	b. An expert on the topic	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	c. Skilled at working with groups of older adults	1	2	3	4	5
					Please comment on what you think the ideal qualities of a Learning Center teacher are:					
					18. Please make any additional comments that you would like to:					